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LABOUR ORGANISER

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ACTON C.L.P. invites applications for the post of full-time Secretary/Agent. The appointment will be in consultation with the National Executive Committee. Salary and conditions in accordance with the National Agreement. Application forms can be obtained from Alderman J. T. Ledwith, Faraday Hall, Horn Lane, Acton, London, W.3, to whom they should be returned not later than 28th June, 1958.

NOTTINGHAM CITY LABOUR PARTY invites applications for the post of Assistant Organiser. Salary and conditions in accordance with the National Agreement. The appointment to be made in consultation with the National Executive Committee. The Assistant will work under the direction of the City Party Secretary. Application forms can be obtained from Mr. T. W. Ives, 110 Mansfield Road, Nottingham, to whom they should be returned not later than 21st June, 1958.

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ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY. The London Labour Party invites applications for the post of Assistant to the Secretary (Male). Applicants must be members of the Labour Party with knowledge of the Constitution. Experience essential in the keeping of accounts, office organisation, correspondence and the drafting of minutes and reports. Apply by letter only with recent testimonials or references to The Secretary, London Labour Party, 258/262 Westminster Bridge Road, London, S.E.1.

WOOD GREEN C.L.P. invites applications for the post of full-time Secretary/Agent. Salary and conditions in accordance with the National Agreement. The appointment to be made in consultation with the National Executive Committee. Application forms can be obtained from Mr. H. R. Davis, 741 High Road, Tottenham, London, N.17, to whom they should be returned not later than 30th June, 1958.

RUTHERGLEN C.L.P. invites applications for the post of full-time Agent. The appointment will be made in consultation with the National Executive Committee. Salary and conditions in accordance with the National Agreement. Application forms can be obtained from the National Agent, Transport House, Smith Square, London, S.W.1, to whom they should be returned not later than 26th June, 1958.

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THE LABOUR ORGANISER

EDITOR: A. L. WILLIAMS

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Trying to Dish Labour

TORY defeats in the Parliamentary by-elections and at county, borough and other local elections make it plain that the Tories face disaster at the next General Election. It is not surprising, therefore, that murmurs are heard from those who wish to prevent a Labour victory at any price about the necessity of changing our electoral system to make it 'more representative of the people's will'.

The systems of Proportional Representation and the Alternative Vote again are being boosted as superior to our system of single Member constituencies, where the Member is elected on a simple majority.

Though they were satisfied with the existing electoral system when they were one of the major parties in the state and could have effected a change, the Liberals, now that they are a small third party, are the main propagandists for a change. Some would go the whole hog and introduce Proportional Representation, but the majority plump for the Alternative Vote.

Either system would benefit the Liberals and give them representation in Parliament more closely related to their voting strength. But should the whole British system of representative government be upset to ensure fairer Liberal representation, especially when such a change was resisted by them when Labour was the struggling third party?

The purpose of Parliamentary elections is not merely to return local representatives to the House of Commons. Their main purpose is to elect a government which will provide a coherent and responsible administration, and whose legislation will be subject to the critical scrutiny of an Opposition which, in the main, is based on definite principles accepted by wide masses of the electors.

Bewilder Electors

Under the present system, General Elections are fought on broad principles and the electorate has the choice of alternative programmes propounded by responsible and representative political parties. Both Proportional Representation and the Alternative Vote would encourage a motley of candidates, parties and policies, which would bewilder electors and confuse fundamental issues.

It is true that the present system has many anomalies. For instance, it takes more votes to secure a Labour majority than it does a Tory majority, and all governments in recent times have been returned to power on a minority of the total votes cast. But even such a system is preferable to Proportional Representation.

This system would introduce large multi-Membered constituencies and would destroy the existing personal link between a Member and his con-

stituents, which plays such an important part in the day-to-day working of the Parliamentary system.

Also, undoubtedly, it would encourage the multiplication of political parties, which would result in behind the scenes bargaining in Parliament as the only means of securing a government with stable support.

This latter criticism applies also to the Alternative Vote system, under which the second preference votes on the ballot papers of the candidate at the bottom of the poll are transferred to the other candidates, if no candidate has obtained an absolute majority. Under this system it is almost as important to come second in the first count, as it is at present to come first.

At the last General Election there were only 137 contests where there were more than two candidates, and in only 37 of these was the seat won on a minority vote. But, if there was an Alternative Vote it would be advantageous for smaller parties to contest as many seats as possible in the hope that they might survive the first count and win sufficient second preference votes to win the seat.

With the existing trend, this might mean that though Liberal representation would be increased, the Liberal Parliamentary Party would still be small, though just big enough to produce conditions similar to those which existed in 1929, and result in a government being able to continue in office only with Liberal support.

Not Democracy

Such a situation would be the reverse of democracy, because it would give a party with small representation in the House, and much less popular support in the country than the two major parties, a decisive voice in Parliament.

In his book, 'The Electoral System in Britain, 1918-1951', D. E. Butler examines the results of all elections since 1923, and gives tables to show what the results would have been under either the system of Proportional Representation, or that of the Alternative Vote.

As a result of his examination he con-

cludes that during the past thirty years Proportional Representation "would have made minority government the rule and not the exception".

He also concludes that the Alternative Vote, while it would have given a rather more proportionate number of seats to the Liberals, "... would hardly have ensured fair representation all round" and "... it would have done little to clarify the relations between seats and votes in the country as a whole.

LOSE CONTEST, HOLD COUNCIL

LAST month's article on the election of aldermen referred to the importance of the words 'as such'. The words are included in the subsection relating to those who are entitled to vote for aldermen. The actual wording in respect of elections for county aldermen reads as follows:

A county alderman shall not, as such, vote at the election of a county alderman.

The article also said: "As is so often the case, the need for precise knowledge only arises at critical moments—in this case where the fate of a council could depend upon it."

The truth of these words has been exemplified by what has happened in the Staffordshire county council following the recent elections. As a result of the contests Labour secured 37 councillors (including one Independent Labour), to the Conservative-Independent total of 36—a Labour majority of one.

When it came to voting to fill the aldermanic vacancies, the chairman, an alderman, claimed his right to vote as chairman, thus bringing the votes equal. He then proceeded to give his casting vote to all the twelve Conservative-Independent nominees.

As a result there is a Labour majority of elected representatives, but through the votes of the alderman chairman, twelve Conservative-Independent aldermen were elected. There are now 22 Conservative-Independent aldermen to two for Labour, giving the Conservative-Independents a majority of 19.

QUAIR'S PAGE

DOES anyone know what has happened to the People's League for the Defence of Freedom? Regular readers of the *Labour Organiser* may remember that close on two years ago we generously gave a whole-page advertisement, free of charge, to this worthy institution, and commended it to the attention of one and all.

Despite our encouragement, and all the advertisements they had to pay for in other less eminent organs, nothing much seems to have come of it all. But if you punch a bag of feathers it bulges out in another place, and the jokers who launched the League have bobbed up again.

This time it is not a League but a *Front*. This morning's *Jupiter* (May 14th) ran a page advertisement, oddly like that of 1956, which has involved the transfer of £1,400 from the *Front* in High Holborn to Printing House Square.

Although it may be a different circus it has at least a foundation of the same performers. Mr. Edward Martell, my Lord Moynihan, and a Mr. W. J. Brown whom we noticed last time.

WE don't go so far as to urge you to help pay to prop up the *Front*, but you might keep an eye on it.

Its slogan is, 'Keep the Socialists Out Next Time'. It has an ingenious scheme to achieve this: (a) In Conservative-held Marginal Seats no Liberal candidate to stand and Liberals to vote Conservative. (b) In Labour-held Marginal Seats no Conservative candidate to stand and Conservatives to vote Liberal. (c) To persuade the Government to introduce the Alternative Vote.

In furtherance of this scheme it appears to be seeking to promote a sort of underground movement in the Conservative and Liberal Parties. It leaves boring into the Labour Party to other species.

THE gloomy view which the *Front* takes of the prospects of the Conservative Party at the next General

Old Birds in New Feathers

Election is enough to make any Anti-Socialist's flesh creep. Its Casualty List of Conservative M.P.s sombrely tabulates:

- 52 Who Are Doomed,
- 15 In Grave Danger,
- 11 Who Have Cause for Concern,
- 19 Who Need to Worry, and
- 5 Cabinet Ministers and
- 28 Members of the Government Who Are in Jeopardy.

This calamity, and the consequent National Ruin, may be averted if the *Front* is backed with an Initial Propaganda Fund of £100,000.

Whether the calculations of the *Front* are right or wrong I do not know; I leave that to the high-pressure forensic psephologists to haggle about. Nor do I know what possible arrangements, overt or covert, may be made between Liberals and Conservatives, either nationally or here and there, with the aim of dishing the Labour Party.

BUT this I do know: that there are still many Labour Parties scattered about the country that still need to pull themselves together, that there are many whose electioneering practices are primitive and inefficient, that there are many whose propaganda activities are alarmingly meagre.

And I am especially perturbed at this—that I meet large numbers of Party members who will not buy our various policy pamphlets from their local Literature Secretary, much less read them, and are yet able to tell me, very aggressively, all that's wrong with Labour Party policy. Anti-Socialist Fronts can be broken at the election by making our machine sound and by learning the policy which it is our business to propound.

This article by A. L. Williams, the National Agent, describes how a Labour candidate is chosen to fight a by-election.

Selecting for By-Elections

THE political writers in the newspapers have had a grand old time over the selection of the Labour candidate to fight the by-election in St. Helens. There have been so many inside stories, so many interpretations of the constitutional procedure and so much speculation about the inner significance of events that even active Party members are confused about what was once regarded as a simple matter.

In no other party is the procedure for selecting a Parliamentary candidate so clear, or so democratic, as in the Labour Party. The job is done by the constituency organisation. Selection is made from the nominations, submitted by party sections and affiliated bodies, at a special meeting of the committee responsible for managing the affairs of the party, the General Committee, which is made up of delegates from all the organisations which compose the local party.

Constitutional Procedure

Though the selection is carried out in co-operation with the National Executive Committee, in fact the latter is only concerned with ensuring that the procedure laid down in the rules is carried out, that the nominees have been validly nominated and, after selection, that financial responsibility for the candidature is accepted by the constituency party.

Of course, the candidature is subject to endorsement by the National Executive Committee. At a General Election the Labour Party asks the electorate to vote for its candidates so that there may be a Labour government. The electors have a right to know that every Labour candidate has the confidence of the Party and that by voting for him they are voting for Labour's declared

policy. In practice, only very rarely does the National Executive Committee refuse its endorsement to a candidate properly selected by a local party.

There is a difference in selecting a candidate to fight the next General Election and selecting a candidate to fight a by-election, though if a Labour candidate already has been endorsed for a constituency where a by-election occurs he becomes the candidate for the by-election.

Three Months

Normally, the selection of a candidate takes anything up to three months. It is not possible to take so long in finding a candidate for a by-election vacancy. The electors get restive if they are left too long without a Member of Parliament, and Members of Parliament themselves raise the matter in the House if they think there has been undue delay in moving the Writ for a new election. When the seat was held by an opposing party, it is possible that the Writ may be moved within a few days of the vacancy being made known.

The Labour Party rules contain a paragraph which sets aside the normal selection procedure in the case of a by-election and introduces emergency provisions. The paragraph reads:

If a Parliamentary by-election occurs in the constituency the procedure laid down in Section 3 of this clause shall be suspended and the National Executive Committee shall co-operate with the Executive Committee of this party in the nomination of a candidate. The National Executive Committee may, if it deems it necessary in the interests of the Labour Party, advise the Executive Committee of this party to select a nomination it may submit to it.

Apart from the time factor, which

frequently makes it impossible to have adequate consultation about the candidature with the local party sections and affiliated organisations, a reason this power has been given to the National Executive is that by-elections often assume national significance. Not only is the local representative being decided, but also Government policy is under fire. The defeat of the National Government at the Fulham by-election before the war had an important effect on the foreign policy pursued by Baldwin: a string of by-election defeats can demonstrate that the Government has lost the confidence of the public, and a victory is usually regarded as a vote of confidence.

Naturally, the political parties are anxious that their candidates in such important contests are capable of handling with credit the national issues upon which the by-election will be fought. Consequently, their headquarters play a much more active role in the selection of the candidate than they do when the selection is taking place of a candidate who will only be one of many fighting a General Election.

Another reason is that by-elections provide opportunities for party leaders who have lost their seats at the previous General Election to return to the House of Commons. Ramsay MacDonald lost his seat at Leicester in the coupon election of 1918. Subsequently he returned to Parliament as the victor of a by-election at Aberavon. Arthur Henderson came back to Westminster via a by-election after his defeat in the previous General Election, and so did Arthur Greenwood after the disaster of 1931.

Seat Disappeared

Clement Attlee, when he was Prime Minister, saw the seat he had represented for many years disappear because of redistribution. He was fortunate to receive an invitation to be the candidate at the next election from a strong Labour constituency whose Member had announced his intention

not to fight again. Otherwise, the Parliamentary Labour Party may have been deprived of his leadership until a suitable by-election provided the opportunity for his return.

In recent years the National Executive Committee has used its powers to name a by-election candidate exceedingly sparingly. In most cases, even where it has submitted a name, it has asked that its nomination should be considered with others sent in by local bodies, and the choice has been left to the constituency party. Sometimes, the National Executive nominee has been chosen and sometimes a local nominee has been preferred.

In all these cases the National Executive has been concerned with permitting the claims of an ex-Member (usually a former Minister, though not always) to be considered, while leaving the constituency party to make the final choice. Even though the full constitutional powers of the National Executive are so infrequently exercised these days, it is still not possible to follow the ordinary method of selection because of shortness of time, and a new procedure has been devised to meet the situation.

At By-Elections

Under this procedure, the local Executive is consulted as speedily as possible after the vacancy is known. It is informed that though the National Executive reserves the right to nominate if it so wishes, arrangements should be made for nominations to be invited locally and for the General Committee to meet as the selection conference. The normal minimum of twenty-eight days for the return of nominations being impracticable, nominations have to be made within eight or nine days and the selection has to take place within a short time afterwards.

The nominations are examined by the National Agent as to their validity. The local Executive Committee, if it is found necessary because of a large number of nominations, draws up a short list from the valid nominations, including the National Executive nomination, if one has been made. When this short list is

continued on page 119

WHAT IS A GOOD NOMINATION?

by **LEN SIMS**

NO election campaign would be complete without queries being raised on the subscribing of nomination papers. Once again nominations were lost in the local government elections through not adhering to the advice tendered in our booklet, and repeated, with illustrations, in our series of printed reminders.

One conscientious agent, in following the sound principle of scrutinising all the nomination papers before delivery, found, to his surprise, that all the assenters on one candidate's nomination paper had entered their surname first. On drawing the attention of the candidate to this method of entry he was informed that it had always been done that way.

Being on excellent terms with the returning officer, the agent thought he would take along this nomination paper (in advance of the last day) and see what happened. Another surprise lay in store for him as the nomination paper was accepted! The worthy agent says he is now wondering about the real position as a study of the R.P.A. does not specifically say that forenames must precede surnames.

Real Question

The question really revolves around the word 'signature' which appears consistently throughout the Rules, and what is considered in common law to be a signature. It is held that the signature of a person is that which he subscribes to correspondence or documents in order that he may be identified.

There have been many court decisions on signatures and the best interpretation is as follows: The initials of the Christian name together with the surname, or the Christian name and the surname, or the Christian name contracted and the surname.

In the case of electoral procedure, the electoral number is required also

as a further means in identifying the person as a registered elector.

In common practice no person would append his signature with his surname first. A further indication that the subscription should commence with the forename is provided when entering the name of the candidate on the nomination paper. Specific reference is made for the surname to be placed first, and then followed by his other names.

Register Entry

One of the reasons why doubt arises is because reference is made to registered electors. The register of electors comprises entries with the surname first, but this should not be confused with signatures. We always stress the desirability of making sure that the names on the nomination paper agrees with the entries in the register. That advice is given to safeguard the nomination against errors in spelling, etc., not to be interpreted as being in the same form.

All the judgments given in election petitions on the question of signatures are in respect of the fullness of the Christian names, and of an entry such as 'Junr.' after the surname—all indicating that the forenames precede the surname.

In the case of the nomination paper that has been subscribed with the surnames first, though incorrect, the election could not be affected. It is laid down that the decision of the returning officer that a nomination paper is valid shall be final and shall not be questioned in any proceeding whatsoever.

Another most interesting and unusual situation to be reported raises the question of what happens if the wrong person is declared elected. It would appear that in this particular case the count was followed by a recount, after which a candidate was formally declared elected by a majority of three

votes. As was to be expected, the candidate and his supporters went off to celebrate in the usual manner.

Some 20 minutes after the declaration the returning officer appeared to say that a mistake had been made in the count. He therefore asked the candidate to go back to the school where the count had taken place. This the candidate refused to do, saying that the declaration had been made out in his favour, and, so far as he was concerned, there the matter rested.

The particular circumstances leading the returning officer to make this request is not known. It can only be assumed that something had been found which either altered the result of the election, or amended the figures that had been announced.

When reported to us, the question naturally arose in our minds as to what would be the position of the returning officer had declared the wrong person elected.

Local Election Rule 46 of the R.P.A. 1949 states that, after the result of the poll has been ascertained, the returning officer shall forthwith declare to be elected the candidate or candidates to whom the majority of votes have been given.

The important words would appear to be 'forthwith'—which means there must be no undue delay in declaring the result—and 'to whom the majority of votes have been given'. What, if after declaring a candidate elected, some ballot papers came to light which indicated that the candidate declared as elected had not received a majority of votes? Similarly, what would happen if the votes were wrongly cast up so as to affect the result?

Two Views

It appears that there are two views. 'Parker' states that if the returning officer thinks there is an error in the counting he can re-count the votes *before* he declares the result (R. v. Bangor, Mayor, etc. of, 18 Q.B.D. 354, and Stepney, 2 T.L.R. 571). But if, *after* he has declared the result, the counting is still erroneous, the mistake can only be rectified by filing an election petition praying a re-count (Renfrew, 2 O'M. & H. 213; Ashton-under-Lyne, 1885; and Dublin, 1 P.R. & D. 193).

On the other hand, 'Schofield' says where the result is declared and then further ballot papers are found in ballot boxes, these should be counted and the result re-declared. He gives as his reference the Derbyshire North Eastern case.

Special Case

This was a special case which came before the High Court in 1923, and arose from a parliamentary contest where a high number of ballot papers were rejected by the returning officer, some 76 in all, and the majority was only five.

In addition to this high number of rejected ballot papers, it was also found that three ballot papers had been inadvertently left in the ballot boxes and not counted. After hearing the particular circumstances surrounding these three ballot papers they were allowed to be included in the count, but this did not affect the result of the election.

It would appear that the inclusion of the three ballot papers was really a minor factor in the case. Whether or not such a ruling would justify the returning officer in re-declaring the result, as in the case outlined above—without the necessity of an election petition—would depend on all the facts being known.

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THE article in the May issue of the *Labour Organiser* by Norman Fox, under the title 'Too Many Members?' is a sad commentary on the standard of thinking in the Party on this matter. Indeed, it is all too true that the muddled thinking revealed in Mr. Fox's article is perhaps more popular than the views I wish to expound.

I have the honour to be the secretary and agent of a party which at the end of 1957 had a paying membership of 10,468, and the total subscriptions collected was £2,684 12s. 7d. I have not noticed that there is any danger of the party becoming suffocated because of too many members!

I think for the enlightenment of those interested in membership development that the achievements of my party in this field should be briefly stated. The credit for this achievement is not mine, as I have only been in Woolwich some eight years.

Was Lucky

I was lucky enough to come into a party which believes in membership and has proved that by membership development a live, vigorous, democratic and financially sound Party can be built.

The Woolwich Labour Party was founded in 1903, and in that year it was decided to recruit individual members and establish ward committees, 15 years before the Party nationally decided to do so. In that year the party had 1,954 members and subscriptions amounted to £111.

In those days Woolwich was one constituency. Following the first World War, the borough was divided and we now have two constituencies—Woolwich East, which is a safe Labour seat, and Woolwich West, which has an adverse majority of 1,800.

As I write I have in front of me a table showing the yearly membership figures and the subscriptions collected since 1903. This fact alone illustrates that the party adopted business-like methods right at the beginning. Except

WOOLWICH FOR A BIG

Last month a contributor to the *Labour Organiser* which a Constituency Labour Party has to be its membership. The secret of the first local party to introduce this argument. He claims that the function adequately

during the war years the figures have increased year by year.

There is no half way house in membership development, you either want membership or you don't. If you do, then the first job is to convince your active people and, of course, adopt methods which will ensure that subscriptions are collected regularly and that members are given a sense of belonging to something in which they can take a pride. Parties who recruit members and then fail to collect their subscriptions are doing our Cause a lot of harm.

Sad Commentary

It is a sad commentary on a modern Party that, in 1958, many constituencies have less members than Woolwich had in 1903.

Woolwich is a fully centralised party. All membership subscriptions are paid into the party centrally and if the total collected during 1957 is examined, it will be seen that the average per member was over 5s. There are a large number of old age pensioners who pay 1s. per year and, of course, there are the losses due to deaths, removals and lapses, and the new members recruited during the year

GOES IN MEMBERSHIP

hat there was a level beyond could not attempt to increase Woolwich Labour Party, the dual membership, replies to local Labour Party cannot a large membership

who have not paid a full subscription. The figure, therefore, is a good result.

There are several ways in which membership benefits a party. If you have a large membership the party is always busy; this must be a good thing, for it means that a large number of people are participating in activity. How can you possibly hope to train people in electioneering if the only time you do any door-step work is in elections.

Then there is the electoral advantages. To illustrate this I give an example of one of our wards in the marginal constituency of Woolwich West.

At the end of the War the borough council commenced building an estate which was completed a year or so ago. This estate, together with an area of owner-occupied property, is now a ward. It has an electorate of some 6,000 and at the local elections in 1956 with a 54.16 per cent poll, Labour polled 1,886 and the Tories 1,136.

Best Organised

This is now one of our best organised wards. It has been achieved by continual doorstep work. As residents moved into their new homes they were contacted and requested to join the party.

Every year the Labour promises are canvassed. The ward had a membership of 903 at the end of 1957. Subscriptions amounted to £233 18s. 1d.

The ward has a lively social side which runs a weekly whist drive, periodic and successful dances, trips to the seaside and theatres, and an annual ward dinner and dance. Last year it donated £36 to our Election Fund, and paid in £232 from two draws and a 'once only' football scheme organised by the Woolwich party.

In the recent L.C.C. election a 100 per cent canvass was done and the percentage poll was 51.24 per cent. The ward's ambition now is to reach a membership of 1,000.

The residents in this area have good reason to know that the Labour Party is a live and vigorous force, and I am sure numerous electors have been encouraged to vote Labour because of this.

New Estates

The same has been done on all our new estates and is happening at the moment at Abbey Wood, where the L.C.C. are building a new estate. If this had not been done I do not think the interest in the Labour Party would be very much.

On the financial side it is not only the subscriptions that count, you can appeal to members at election time and we, at any rate, do fairly well, and of course we raise a lot of money on our Christmas and Derby draws, which are confined to members, not to mention the Jumble Sales, etc., arranged by wards and sections.

We also feel that we are fulfilling our commitments to the Party regionally and nationally. Last year we paid £441 to Head Office and £131 to the London Labour Party in affiliation fees.

Finally, membership is important for a democratic organisation. Continual doorstep work keeps one in touch with the electors. As a result of continual campaigning I believe the Labour Party in this borough has helped to develop a high standard of citizenship, a civic pride and a respect for the Party which is remarkable.

We shall not need any exhortations from Head Office or Regional Office to commence a membership campaign, indeed, many wards have already decided on this without any exhortation from me.

Year after year at the Annual Conference we hear constituency delegates complain about the block vote of the

Trade Unions. The answer to this is not an alteration to the constitution, but the development of individual membership. The membership should be at least three million. Just think of the added prestige and stability this would give the Party.

It always amazes me that we have in the Party people who can produce the

answer to any national or international problem, but we fail miserably when it comes to the simple organisational job of making and retaining members.

Woolwich has done it successfully for over 50 years and I am confident we can continue to do so.

JOHN KEYS

Eastleigh Wins Shield

I TOIL in vineyards where Labour Parties are not cursed by inflated prestige membership as described by Mr. Norman Fox. No calls are made for the first-aid kit to revivify those suffocating from abnormally high membership.

Recently, Mrs. Dora Gaitskell presented the National Executive Committee's Trophy for the most meritorious membership effort in the Southern Region, for the year 1957. It was quite an occasion. The Membership Competition had resolved into a kind of Hampshire 'Derby'.

Eastleigh were winners and Petersfield the runners-up. Each forms part of this lovely county, yet each is so different from the other. The Borough of Eastleigh has been under Labour control since 1926. It contains within its boundaries a vast British Railways depot, bustling with work for modernisation and dieselisation, and an ageing civil aerodrome, which is a bone of local contention.

Within the constituency is a large Shell Mex oil depot, Air Service Training Ltd., where airmen from all over the world are trained to be pilots, and Follands, manufacturers of light aircraft. Also within the constituency is the Parish of Eling, largest parish in England. It is never called 'Eling', but is always known as 'Totton'—now for the first time under Labour control.

A few miles away is Petersfield constituency. This is the 'huntin', shootin', and fishin'' country of the South; here

are the pleasant country towns of Alton and Petersfield; here are smiling valleys and rich woodlands. If you want a fat trout or a fine hare, go to Petersfield.

Charlie Watts, on behalf of Eastleigh, with all the gallantry of a Hampshire man, described Petersfield as being the real winners. Well, Eastleigh got the trophy with 235 points!

Target Set

Each constituency in the region is set a *target* figure for total membership. Let me quote—"Increased membership—The *target* for each party equals 100 points. The *maximum* of 150 points is awarded for reaching 150 per cent or more of the *target*. Increases of between 50 per cent and 150 per cent produce points from 50 to 150.

The *target* for subscriptions was in 1957, 4s. 2d. per member. The *target* equalled 100 points. Fifty points were given for reaching 50 per cent of the *target*, and averages of between 50 per cent and 150 per cent produced points from 50 to 150 per cent. The points for membership and subscriptions are added together."

When the information has been collected from the constituencies, the results are all worked out on a calculating machine, which is entirely impersonal.

Eastleigh is a 'razor marginal' constituency, with a Tory majority of 545 in the last General Election. Petersfield, on the other hand, is represented in Parliament by Peter Legh, the heir of Lord Newton, with a comfortable Tory majority of 14,090.

In recent months Eastleigh has hinged

membership effort to a tote scheme. By the end of 1957 Eastleigh had 3,184 individual members, collecting an average subscription of 5s. 4½d. per member. The 1957 membership figures showed an increase of 1,308 over 1956.

Petersfield achieved an individual membership of 947 by the end of December, 1957, with an average collected subscription of 5s. 10d., the increase of membership during the year being 330.

Warm tributes were paid to Jim Lyons, Agent for Eastleigh when the presentation of the trophy was made. His zeal and drive has already contributed much towards the fashioning of the Eastleigh Labour Movement into a strong striking force in preparation for the next General Election.

Jim Lyons was not the only hero of the day. Seventy-one year old veteran of World War I, Mr. S. J. Robinson, is honorary secretary of Petersfield C.L.P. Every week, come rain or shine, he sets off on Shank's pony across footpaths, over common lands, and along the lanes, to cover ten miles of collecting for the Party.

Says Mr. Robinson, "I never felt so fit in my life". Mind you, Robinson doesn't think a ten mile walk heroic, and he never stops to think about 'an optimum level of membership which can be obtained and maintained reasonably easily.'

Parties, like people, are so different, aren't they? At Eastleigh, with its slender 45 Tory majority, 'the fields are white and ready to harvest', whilst at Petersfield the demand is for still more men with the seal of Mr. Robinson!

FRANK SHEPHERD

Students Canvass Essex Rural Area

ESSEX was won in the county elections by the narrow margin of three seats. A big part in the winning of two seats was played by four students from Oxford

and Cambridge University Labour Clubs.

Before the elections they were sent by the Regional Office to canvass the Halstead and Hedingham divisions in Saffron Walden constituency and the Bardfield division partly in Maldon and partly in Saffron Walden.

The team, led by Howard Glennerster, of Wadham College, Oxford, despite bitterly cold weather, contacted 2,994 electors scattered over a very wide area of countryside.

Picturesque Villages

Labour's message was taken to picturesque villages such as Earl's Colne, Sible and Castle Hedingham, Steeple Bumpsted, Panfield, Shalford and the industrial town of Halstead. Besides distributing literature, the students enrolled members and registered 48 electors to vote by post.

Altogether they enrolled 369 members and collected £28 in subscriptions. Of the new members 20 volunteered to collect subscriptions, and in the subsequent elections a number of others lent assistance to the Labour candidates.

What was the result of this work in terms of electoral advantage? We gained Halstead and Hedingham, two of three divisions covered by the campaign. Indeed, Hedingham was won by Frank Elliott after a recount, by three votes, and this result was a tremendous shock to the Tories, who had regarded the seat as impregnable.

The Saffron Walden comrades deserved the success which came their way because they went to endless trouble to plan the campaign and to provide for the comfort of the students.

County Councillor

Frank Elliott, in addition to being a farmer and now a county councillor, is the constituency party secretary. He spent the week with the students on the doorstep and was richly rewarded with a personal victory.

After the local elections, this work is to be followed up by the formation of Local Parties at Earl's Colne and Thaxted.

For years Saffron Walden has been looked upon as one of the more difficult rural constituencies. However, R. A. Butler is the sitting member and there is a determination here to defeat him next time.

HOW TO KEEP PROPER RECORDS

THE first essential for fighting a marginal election is a recorded knowledge of the electorate, one by one. The register, though the obvious basis, is a bad thing to use for this purpose, because it wasn't designed for it and it changes every year.

We use a card index instead—or rather, not one huge card index for the whole borough, but one for each polling district, kept there by the District Manager and not at the central office.

The index is made up of 5" x 3" cards, with nothing printed on them except a line for the address and four more for names. Every name on the register appears on one of them, *so the register and the index correspond exactly*. We've transferred the register to cards.

The voting habit of each elector is indicated by the colour of the card.

WHITE=FOR US. The vast majority of these, of course, are electors who say, when asked, 'I'm Labour'. But we describe as 'for us', because the category includes all those who will vote Labour in the next election, e.g., a Liberal who, in the absence of a Liberal candidate, will vote Labour.

BLUE=AGAINST US. Mainly Tories, naturally. But an elector, for example, who describes himself as a Liberal, but will vote Tory when there's no Liberal candidate, goes on a Blue Card, like a Tory.

BUFF=DOUBTFUL. Any elector who: (a) hasn't made up his mind; (b) won't tell; (c) has religious beliefs that forbid him to vote; (d) is a Liberal who simply won't vote for anybody but a Liberal.

One thing a Buff Card must never mean is 'not contacted'.

GREEN=NOT IDENTIFIED. Unfortunately, we usually have some of these—electors we haven't been able to contact. They should be a small number and we take the first opportunity to eliminate them altogether. In the meantime, we put them on a Green Card.

There is considerable advantage in keeping down the bulk of the cards (which, incidentally, are canvass as well as index cards). So the District

Manager puts on one card all electors in one household of the same voting habit.

If, on canvassing the Childs' family of four electors at 1385, Bloggs Road, Mantown, we find them all for us, the go in the index (see 1).

When we canvass the Joneses at 1383, we find two of them are Tories and one is Doubtful. So there has to be two cards. On each of these cards the District Manager makes a note to indicate to canvassers that there are more electors in this household than appear on the card they come to first (see 2 and 3).

Certain electors can't vote at particular elections: 'Y' voters, in any election before 1st October, and 'L' voters, in any Parliamentary election.

The names on the register are marked 'Y' or 'L' and the District Manager marks them in the same way on the cards, so that in an election we don't go canvassing people for a vote they can't use or doing something equally irrelevant to the campaign (see 4).

The index corresponds with the register. This state of affairs is upset on 15th February each year, when the new register is published. Fortunately we get advance information about the changes from List B (electors coming on) and List C (electors going off) published on the previous 28th November.

The lists are sent out to polling districts immediately. List C doesn't help much, but the electors on List B are canvassed and their 'colour' discovered. The District Manager makes out cards of the appropriate colours and enters the approximate date, but *doesn't insert them in the index till 15th February*.

When the new register comes out the District Manager checks index against register, name by name, and (1) Takes out and destroys 'redundant' cards; (2) puts in the new cards (there may be a few GREENS to add be

cause of the claims allowed after List B was made up); (3) makes sure he's got 'L' or 'Y' on the card where it appears on the register; (4) removes 'L' or 'Y' from the cards where it no longer appears on the register.

The index now corresponds with the new register, as it did with the old one.

The vital purpose of the index is to enable us to locate all the Labour votes in an election, not to lay bets on the outcome or, in some vague way, to 'see how we're doing'.

Nevertheless, the information on all those cards, suitably summarised, can be of the utmost value. Moreover, we use the cards for canvassing and so they need to be held together in batches suitable for that job.

The District Manager puts all the cards for one street (or part of a big street) in register order in a folder-cover. The cover and the cards are punched in the top left-hand corner and a tag threaded through keeps the 'book' together. The books are then fitted into a cabinet in register order of streets. The index is made.

The front of the folder has a summary form printed on it. Take, for instance, Thames Street, which has 82 houses and 175 electors. The District Manager counts the names on White, Blue, Buff and Green cards and enters the figures on the cover-summary (see 5 over page).

The number of houses (easy to get from the register) is entered on the summary, because it's so useful for organising delivery and canvassing.

It will be noticed that some alterations have been made in the figures on this cover-summary. There were once 29 Greens—far too many—and a canvass was therefore done. Results—Greens down by 24, Whites up by 14 and Blues by 10.

The second line of figures in the illustration was put in when the new register came out. Another small canvass has also been done now and the Greens are out.

It's only a short step from the street summaries to a polling district summary. The information from the book-covers is transferred (see 6 over page).

(1)

1385 Bloggs Road, Mantown

Childs, Maurice Q.

Childs, Alice Mary

Childs, Judy

Childs, Harold B.

(White Card)

(2)

Also next card

1383 Bloggs Road, Mantown

Jones, Angus F.

Jones, Maureen R.

(Blue Card)

(3)

Also previous card

1383 Bloggs Road, Mantown

Jones, William

(Buff Card)

(4)

222 Brass Street, Mantown

L—Nuffield, Thomas

(Green Card)

(5)

POLLING DISTRICT .. KATESGROVE 2
STREET .. BATTLE ROAD

Electors	WHITE	BLUE	BUFF	GREEN	HOUSES
172	66-80	71-81	6	29-5	82
175	86	83	6	—	82

Every name on the register should appear on a card.
 No name not on the register should appear.

(6)

POLLING DIS. .. CASTLE 2 .. Polling Station .. Grovelands Road School
Area Organiser .. Mr. M. Groves
Address .. 15 Checkendon Street

Houses	Regd. Electors	Streets	WHITE	BLUE	BUFF	GREEN
180	309	Cadogan Road ..	197	92	14	6
54	113	Cambridge Road ..	67	43	2	1
51	75	Cardiff Avenue ..	53	11	9	2
39	59	East Street	40	13	2	4
85	173	Grove Avenue	83	85	4	1
4	12	Hildon Close	5	7	—	—
55	108	Hill Street	45	60	1	2
52	113	Langley Road	49	64	—	—
85	154	North Street	93	53	6	2
202	413	Riverside Road .. .	289	93	21	10
83	170	Sloane Road	65	100	3	2
27	56	Smith Street	31	22	—	3
10	23	The Grove	8	15	—	—
11	20	The Wharf	18	—	1	1
67	135	Wendham Street ..	83	42	6	4
91	218	West Street	157	58	2	1
1,096	2,151		1,283	758	71	39

This article is the second of a series describing the 'Reading' electoral system

MINERS LINK-UP WITH LABOUR

by S. E. Barker

THE ninth Annual Conference of the Labour Party was held in the Portsmouth Town Hall on January 9th, 1909.

Total affiliated trade union membership had again increased. It was now 1,152,786, despite the uncertainty about the law caused by the appeal court decision in the case of *Osborne v. The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants*. The number of affiliated trades councils and local Labour Parties had grown from 92 to 133. Affiliated membership of Socialist Societies had increased by over 5,000, and the Women's Labour League had been very quick to take advantage of the constitutional change which made possible its affiliation.

Majority Vote

During the year the Miners' Federation had balloted its members and by 213,137 votes to 168,294 had decided to affiliate, which brought great strength in every possible way to the Labour Party.

The year 1908 was not a very good one for the Party so far as by-election results were concerned. The first took place in South Leeds, where the Leeds Labour Representation Committee had already selected Mr. Albert Fox, General Secretary of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, who contested the seat in 1906. Unfortunately, at this time, friction existed between Mr. Fox's Society and the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants in connection with the latter's 'All Grades' movement.

In view of the situation the local committee convened a special meeting, rescinded its decision to adopt Mr. Fox as candidate and decided to invite new nominations. However, all efforts failed to secure a candidate and the

Leeds committee withdrew from the contest.

The National Executive Committee examined all the circumstances surrounding Mr. Fox's candidature, decided that they were such that he was entitled to full support and placed him in the field as official Labour candidate. His vote fell from 4,030 in the 1906 General Election to 2,451. There was widespread regret that non-political difficulties should have been allowed to jeopardise Labour's chances.

A by-election took place at Dewsbury with Ben Turner as our standard bearer. Ben failed to hold his General Election vote by only a very small number.

Dundee and Montrose were fought by the Scottish Labour Party and the candidates were given financial and other forms of help by the Labour Party. In Dundee, G. H. Stewart polled 4,014 in a four-cornered fight against 6,883 in a five-cornered fight in 1906. Winston Churchill, standing as Liberal candidate, won this by-election. Labour did not contest Montrose in 1906, but in the 1908 by-election Joe Burgess, grandfather of the late Wilfred Fienburgh, polled 1,937 votes, securing second place in a three-cornered fight.

Members' Salaries

There was an interesting debate on salaries paid to Members of Parliament out of the Parliamentary Fund. When the sum of £200 per year was fixed in 1903 the length of the session was about six months. In 1908 it had been extended to nine months and the additional Autumn session had placed a strain on the pockets of Labour Members of Parliament. The National Executive Committee brought this problem to the attention of Conference, but made no recommendation. Mr. J. Cross, of the Textile Workers'

Union, moved the reference back of this section of the Report in order that the National Executive Committee could report fully to the next Conference on whether the present rate of pay was adequate.

George Bernard Shaw, representing the Fabian Society, took part in this debate. Shaw believed that the remuneration of Labour Members of Parliament should be increased so that they could be equipped in every possible way to stand face to face with the men of the plutocratic parties.

An amendment, moved by the Typographical Association and seconded by the Miners, calling for an extra payment of £20 for the Autumn session and for the matter to be referred to the Executive Committee to revise the scale, was finally approved by Conference.

Scotland Again

The nature of the negotiations between the National Executive Committee and the Scottish Labour Party had proved very unsatisfactory, and acting on the decision of the previous year's Conference a decision had been taken to affiliate Scottish Parties. Conference also agreed that these organisations should have the right to submit the names of Parliamentary candidates for endorsement.

Mr. Arthur Peters, the newly-appointed National Agent, presented his first report, which was unanimously endorsed by Conference. He had visited almost every constituency where the Labour Party had sitting Members of Parliament, or where candidates had been adopted or were under consideration. He had given very special attention to registration and in his tour had given useful service to the constituencies showing how such vital work as this could be done efficiently.

Twenty-four full-time agents had reported to him on their work in respect of registration which was an indication of the great interest which was being taken in the electoral

register. Mr. Peters expressed pleasure that the number of full-time agents was increasing and he firmly contended that the most efficient voluntary officers could not secure the firm grip on organisational and electoral machinery which was essential to further victory.

Parliamentary Party

The report of the Parliamentary Labour Party makes interesting reading. Arthur Henderson had been elected Chairman, George Barnes Vice-Chairman, and Ramsay MacDonald had been re-elected Secretary.

That year the King's Speech had made reference to proposals for grappling with the growing problem of unemployment. Disappointed, the Parliamentary Labour Party moved an amendment to the Address expressing regret that His Majesty had not seen fit to recommend any legislation to deal with this grave problem. The debate on this amendment was said to have been of a remarkably high standard, studded with brilliant speeches made by MacDonald, Crookes, Curran and Snowden. The Amendment was lost, but the Government majority fell to 49—the lowest since it had taken office.

There had been several amendments to the Party Constitution over the years, and the National Executive Committee now numbered 15. Eleven representatives from trade unions, one from trades councils and local Labour parties, and three from Socialist societies.

William Barefoot

From the year of its foundation there had been men of outstanding character and political ability on the Executive Committee. Many of them became politicians of national and international repute. A man who was never known as a Parliamentarian, but who became renowned as an organiser of rare quality was elected at this conference. He was William Barefoot, Secretary of the Woolwich Trades Council, who was elected to represent the Trades Councils and local Labour Parties.

Woolwich still leads in individual membership and there can be no doubt that the remarkable history of the Woolwich party is largely due to the foundation which William Barefoot laid.

Local Gift Day Raises Nearly £400

'Our Gift Day was again held at the Civic Hall, Slaithwaite.

'Once again we owe a debt of gratitude to all those good comrades who worked so hard. Although all targets were not reached the amount given to the divisional party was £397 10s., the highest total ever reached at this event.'

Annual Report of the Colne Valley Constituency Labour Party.

★ ★ ★

'It is very pleasing to be able to report, for the second year running, an increase in membership—344 new members were enrolled and 145 lost, a nett gain of 199 ...

'Although we have not yet reached, as I had hoped to do, the largest individual membership in the party's history, our present figures are more accurate than in the past, being based on actual paying membership and not just on cards issued.'

Annual Report of the Cheltenham Constituency Labour Party.

★ ★ ★

'A feature of the work of the Borough Party over recent years has been the organisation of week-end schools, both on Party Organisation and Election Organisation. During 1957 we were able to hold an additional school, specially convened for members of the City Council Labour Group, on Local Government work.

'These schools are continuing to prove very well worth while, and we recommend a continuation of this policy in the belief that the schools will assist in the development of organisation.'

Annual Report of the Birmingham Borough Labour Party.

★ ★ ★

'The membership for 1957 is 1,847. This compares with a figure of 1,759 at the end of 1956. The target for individual membership in this constituency has been 2,500 for the past two years and we have still a long way to go to reach it. Membership development campaigns have been undertaken in the Gillmoss, Dovecot and Croxteth wards during the course of the year, but in all cases the members enrolled have only little more than replaced the wastage that we always experience from one year to the next. All

wards are aware of the need to improve the membership position and are discussing the ways and means of doing so. We must not fail to surpass our target figure in 1958.'

Annual Report of the West Derby Constituency Labour Party.

★ ★ ★

'With the co-operation of active members, there are two groups of individual members in industrial establishments in the city. If this could be extended, I feel sure many more Trade Unionists could be linked with the Labour Party.'

Annual Report of the Dundee City Labour Party.

Continued from page 107

approved by the National Executive Committee, it is circulated to the members of the General Committee as part of the notice convening the selection conference, the date of which will have been given already in the letter inviting nominations. From then onwards the selection follows the normal course.

This procedure differs from that followed under normal conditions in the following ways:

1. *Instead of two or three months, the selection takes only two or three weeks;*
2. *National Executive Committee may nominate;*
3. *Short list from which the candidate is chosen has to receive National Executive approval;*
4. *General Committee meeting, usually held before the selection conference is convened to consider the local Executive Committee's recommendations about a short list, is dispensed with.*

By this procedure the National Executive plays its part in the selection while conceding the right of the local party to make the final choice. In following it the National Executive surrenders most of the power given to it by the Party rules, but that power is still there, to be used when the National Executive considers that the interests of the Party makes its exercise necessary.

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